

Testimony of Matthew Holcombe before the Environment Committee in support of H.B. 6263

Dear Co-Chairmen Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and Members of the Environment Committee,

I am a "10 Mill landowner" in Marlborough & Hebron and I am here to testify in support of H.B. 6263.

Landowners in the 10 Mill program like me have made a 100-year commitment to protecting our forest lands. This long-term commitment was originally incentivized by keeping property taxes low at the 10 mill rate. However, on the 50-year anniversary of being in the program our property taxes are likely to increase dramatically if both our standing timber and property would be re-assessed and taxed based upon their current "developable" values (even though we have no intentions to develop). The significant rise in property values over the last half century could not have been foreseen either by the State or by the landowners who originally entered into this 100-year agreement.

H.B. 6263 suggests a common-sense compromise that would allow our property taxes to increase upon our 50-year anniversary in the program, but the property taxes would be capped sensibly at the same per-acre rate paid by other forest landowners in the Public Act 490 program.

Our forest lands provide multiple benefits to our community by providing habitat, cleansing air and water, and maintaining our town's rural character. If our property taxes increase beyond the P.A. 490 rate, it would unfairly penalize those of us who have made this long-term commitment to forest conservation. Indeed, our forest lands are already protected by the prospect of large penalties if we were to either withdraw from the program or change the current forestry use of our property. Again, it is not our intention to change the forestry use of our property, but it would be sadly ironic if the 50-year anniversary property tax increase under 10 Mill forced us to either sell or develop our properties to pay the bill.

Please support H.B. 6263, which would 1) make it easier for us to maintain our long-term commitment to forest conservation by capping our property taxes at the P.A. 490 rate upon our 50-year anniversary in the program, and 2) provide 10 Mill landowners who are willing to place a conservation easement on their properties with the flexibility to keep their lands in 10 Mill or transition into P.A. 490 without a financial penalty. Thank you.

CC: Your State Rep & State Senator

CC: or BCC: Your friends at CFPA